

## THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

### Suggestions for Inclusion in Crown-AGO Detailed Level Work Plan Draft updated September 20, 2011

#### **Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #1: Highlighting collaborative restoration success**

The Administration and its partners should work hard to highlight collaborative restoration successes resulting from CFLRP and other efforts. Key activities to highlight these successes include the following:

- Chief's (and other high ranking officials') visits to sites of early successes (similar to event in Ovando to launch AGO). This sort of visit means a lot to partners, communities and agency staff;
- Media/public awareness strategy to ensure that people begin to see conservation in a positive light when it is advanced through collaborative efforts;
- Regional Foresters, Chief and Administration officials should continue and expand efforts to draw attention to positive examples around the Crown. One way to do this would be to create a new class of award for forest supervisors, district rangers or other staff who make a significant contribution to collaborative restoration efforts;
- Make award and publicize reasons for awards.

#### **Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #2: Crown Version of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conservation Service Corps**

Partner with USFS, NPS, EPA, Department of Education, other agencies, NGOs, schools and colleges to establish a pilot version of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conservation Service Corps focused on restoration, citizen monitoring and enhancing park and forest access via focused trail maintenance efforts in the greater Glacier-Bob.<sup>1</sup> Expand, focus and align public recreation and conservation resources in the Crown.<sup>2</sup> By focusing existing resources on improving trail maintenance and access, this would cost very little in the way of new resources. Create a competitive Crown-wide fund to incentivize the development of project-specific restoration, monitoring and trail maintenance proposals across the landscape.<sup>3</sup> This effort could and should be coordinated with educational institutions at all levels. Some of the restoration work would include work such as trail building and maintenance that can be accomplished with CCC-type labor. Youth from MT conservation corps could also conduct a lot of the monitoring that needs to occur on public lands in the Crown. A strong monitoring program, connected to youth, would help make restoration an enduring part of the AGO legacy in the Crown.

Goals for trail maintenance element of this work could include a commitment to maintain every mile of trail in the Greater Bob Marshall Wilderness and Glacier National Park by 2015. In the context of this goal, all involved agencies should also examine opportunities to increase volunteer work on trails and reduce agency barriers to utilizing volunteer help. Under the auspices of America's Great Outdoors, a Crown-wide public-private partnership could be created to leverage private funds for sustaining the legacy of public lands recreation by providing much needed funds for trail maintenance, recreation facilities and trail system revitalization and improved access. This model has been successfully used in several different programs, including Great Outdoors Colorado (GoCo) and the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP).

More generally, work could also be done to leverage and focus the efforts of existing trail maintenance groups – SCA, AmeriCorps Vista, Youth Conservation Corps, etc. - to not only restore our neglected trail system, but at the same time, create jobs, and connect youth to our public lands system, a system few know about or understand. Youth service corps programs – which may soon get an additional boost from The Public Lands Service Corps Act of 2010 (H.R. 1612 / S. 1442) - provide tremendous job opportunities and training for youth. If the bill passes

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<sup>1</sup> See AGO Recommendations 1.1, 1.3 and Action Items 1.3a and 1.3b

<sup>2</sup> See AGO Report Recommendation 2.2 and Action Item 2.2a

<sup>3</sup> See AGO Report Recommendation 7.1 and Action Item 7.1a

as expected, the various job corps will have a jumpstart on creating the centralized support and coordination needed to execute a Forever Wild Trails Initiative.

### **Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #3: Focusing LWCF and other Resources in the Crown**

Focus a portion of existing federal dollars and other resources on priority restoration, conservation and/or recreation needs in one specific part of the Crown, consistent with existing law and regulations.<sup>4</sup> While restoration, conservation and recreation opportunities in the Crown are significant, a lack of funding often hampers their implementation. By focusing available resources, including LWCF funds, in this landscape more work will get done than if a diluted, unfocused approach to funding continues to be the status quo.

### **Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #4: Coordinate and align federal water resource work in the Crown**

Develop a Crown-specific pilot project that improves coordination of water management programs, financial and technical assistance around water resource management with a special emphasis on removing fish passage barriers and restoring aquatic habitat of threatened and endangered species.<sup>5</sup> Could coordinate with SW Crown Collaborative to see if way to pilot this sort of approach there.

### **Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #5: Develop and Expanding Sustainable Forest Biomass Markets.**

Focus grants, low interest loans and other innovative forest biomass funding tools to develop sustainable forest biomass markets in the Crown.<sup>6</sup> Recognizing that biomass utilization can increase the cost efficiency of forest restoration, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce the use of fossil fuel and the adverse environmental consequences of its production, increase the use of locally produced energy, and contribute to the economic well-being of communities, all agencies should work to support the appropriate and careful use of woody biomass harvesting and conversion to energy when it sustains or enhances the natural structures, functions, and processes of forest ecosystems. Recognizing that woody debris, some of which is removed in biomass harvesting, serves important ecological functions that may be interrupted when it is removed from the land, ensure any such removal is subject to careful analyses of potential impacts.

### **Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #6: Issue Interagency Crown Coordination Executive Order**

Issue an Executive Order requiring agencies to conduct joint analyses and planning across agency boundaries, with incentives to work at a larger, landscape scale. Right now, different agencies often have different management goals and strategies for areas that are adjacent to each other. This joint planning requirement would attempt to consolidate analyses, establish common goals achievable at a larger scale, and help promote more consistent management across boundaries. An interagency coordination statement, as noted above, could help promote these efforts

The Executive Order should establish a pilot landscape program in the Crown of the Continent that applies current administrative authority and programs on a broader scale. Direct that agencies shift budget priorities to fund those programs that enhance landscape-level conservation, restoration and maintenance of working lands. Examples of how existing authorities could be creatively used across a broader landscape include:

Invest in Crown watershed work through the Cooperative Watershed Management Act, which is currently under utilized. This bill has passed Congress but lacks funding and an implementation strategy. This bill was crafted to replicate the successful watershed restoration effort in Montana's Blackfoot Valley, which started with small projects and evolved to address watershed-wide issues. Write an implementation strategy so that successful landscape pilot projects would compete well under the bill's competitive grants program. For the Crown and expanding beyond the Blackfoot, this could result in increased funding for

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<sup>4</sup> See AGO Report Recommendation 5.2, 7.2, and 8.1 as well Action Items 5.2a, 5.2b, 5.2c, 7.2a, 8.1a, 8.1b, 8.1c and 8.1d

<sup>5</sup> See AGO Report Recommendation 9.4 and Action Items 9.4a, 9.4b and 9.4c

<sup>6</sup> See AGO Report Recommendation 7.4 and Action Items 7.4a and 7.4b

local watershed group staffing as well as project money, funding the groups that are actively collaborating.

Apply Farm Bill watershed programs like the Agriculture Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) programs on a Crown level rather than via a producer-by-producer approach. This effort will create incentives for small-scale watershed restoration projects to move toward larger scale efforts. In addition, administrative benefits could include removing some administrative obstacles and redirecting agency funding.

Working with the Department of Education, University of MT, and Environmental Protection Agency, establish a new pilot program for the Crown focused on citizen and student monitoring programs around water and other measures. Monitoring will be a key component of measuring success and involving youth and other volunteers through programs similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps. Large landscape programs should have a solid monitoring plan in place and funded. This monitoring effort would be a direct benefit to the collaboration efforts around the landscape.

Private land conservation will be key to success of many landscapes, and agencies should promote conservation easements in areas where they enhance conservation, including key wildlife migration corridors and habitat.

#### **Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #7: Coordinate and align interagency climate change adaptation planning, projects, and development and testing of tools, resources, and science products within the Crown**

To successfully address AGO Recommendation 8.2, designate one person (or part of a person) at the FS to align and coordinate climate change work by numerous agencies, universities, and partners in-region: this will help ensure that important opportunities to leverage funding with AGO recommendations are not missed. Specifically:

- Many of the Great Northern LCC grants awarded in 2011 (see attached for complete list) will deliver products that directly meet the needs of Recommendations 8.2, 8.2.a and b, including development and testing of various planning tools for climate change, monitoring protocols, etc. on aquatic systems throughout the GNLCC.
- The Southwest Crown CFLR project has significant amounts of funding to carry out restoration work each year that is consistent with climate change strategies to increase resilience in large landscapes, so is likely to provide ribbon-cutting opportunities around riparian habitat restoration, road decommissioning, etc. The program is also required to develop and implement a large-scale monitoring program, enabling the USDA to develop new sources of science to inform management decisions on these lands (see Recommendation 8.2.b). In particular, these restoration projects focus on increasing resilience to fire, insect outbreaks, and non-native species invasions within our National Forests, while simultaneously addressing other threats like habitat fragmentation and erosion from road systems into native trout fisheries. Lastly, many of the CFLR strategies and management actions are consistent with those outlined in the Climate Response Strategies developed by NPS and the FS.
- These efforts are occurring in conjunction with ongoing work to increase FS agency capacity, partnerships and education, adaptation work, and mitigation and sustainable consumption (which includes assessing and managing carbon), as part of the FS Climate Change Scorecard.
- I have also heard (*need written confirmation*) that Montana State University has just received a large EPSCOR grant of \$24 million that will allow them to engage with tribal nations, hire new staff, and coordinate work on climate change impacts and energy in the region, in conjunction with colleagues at the University of Montana.
- The University of Montana is also home to Nobel Laureate Professor Steve Running, who, like the large group of scientists at the Climate Impacts Group at the University of Washington, has developed down-

scaled regional climate change models for the Crown of the Continent using different emissions scenarios. Managers would certainly benefit from coordination of these very expensive science products, along with products from the USGS, and the Crown Managers Partnership, which is completing work on new scientific analyses to facilitate planning decisions across the Crown.

- Lastly, the NPS is in the process of finalizing a comprehensive climate change scenario-planning exercise for the Crown of the Continent that could be used to inform planning and management in the region under this recommendation.
- Please note that this list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather provides a sample of the many initiatives (some funded, some not) that could be utilized best if there was an adequate level of alignment and coordination.

**Crown AGO Work Plan Suggestion #8: Coordinate and align interagency and tribal efforts in the Crown around control of noxious weeds. Provide mechanisms for sharing of information and funding support.**

To address recommendations 8.2 and 8.3 the federal government could create a new Crown scaled process for more efficiently sharing information and resources across federal, state, tribal, watershed entities for a more coordinated process on reducing the spread of noxious weeds. With just a small amount of new funding or re-directing of existing funding sources, a re-grant program for noxious weed control in the Crown could be created that would have tangible outcomes, support collaborative efforts, and highlight some AGO action. As one small example, TWS provided \$10,000 re-grant earlier this year to the Rocky Mountain Front Weed Roundtable (a consortium of several Front watershed or county based weed efforts). It was effectively used to accomplish the following: 1) enhancement of a program that allows for the release of two biological agents to fight the spread of spotted knapweed on the Front; 2) a new contract with the Montana Conservation Corps to treat and map noxious weeds along the Teton Road which is one of the major travel corridors on the Front; 3) production of a 'user-friendly weed-control document for dissemination to Front community members based on comprehensive research conducted by The Nature Conservancy. It would be great to see the federal government scale something like this up in a way that provided dollars and/or tools/information to various entities working on weeds in the Crown (emphasis could be given to tribal lands or grant proposals).

**Cited AGO Report Content Pasted Below**

**Recommendation 1.1**

Catalyze the establishment of a 21st-Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) to engage young Americans in public lands and water restoration.

Many public comments recommended building on existing conservation service corps programs and promoted the idea for a 21st-Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) to provide job training and to maintain and preserve public lands. The 21CSC would provide the umbrella structure for the many existing federal, state, tribal, local, nonprofit, and private sector conservation corps programs and proposals. Its purpose would be to build on and leverage the experience and expertise of these programs and to encourage a new generation of outdoor enthusiasts and natural and cultural resource professionals. The 21CSC program will focus on helping young people, including low-income and disadvantaged youth, to earn valuable training and work experience and to accomplish needed conservation work on public lands in the great outdoors.

**Recommendation 1.3**

Improve federal capacity for recruiting, training, and managing volunteers and volunteer programs to create a new generation of citizen stewards and mentors.

President Obama has called on all Americans to participate in the nation's recovery and renewal through community service. Annually, tens of thousands of volunteers help federal, tribal, and state land management agencies and local governments perform work on the ground. Service activities on public lands play an important

role as these opportunities provide training for inexperienced resource managers, build a stewardship ethic in the volunteers, and help restore and enhance our public lands and waters. In 2009, the CNCS engaged more than five million Americans in service opportunities through its programs, including the Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs, and leads President Obama's national call-to-service initiative, United We Serve.

**Action Item 1.3a:** Improve access to federal resources through an easy-to-use web portal that matches volunteers with opportunities, allows volunteers to create their own projects, and offers resources for training and technical assistance. Hundreds of thousands of volunteer opportunities are searchable on CNCS' [www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov), an online resource for finding, creating, and listing volunteer projects. (DOI)

**Action Item 1.3b:** Expand capacity to build on and promote partnerships and programs on public lands that connect people to the outdoors through meaningful volunteer service opportunities relating to restoration and education. (DOI, USDA, DOD-USACE, DOL, and CNCS)

## **Recommendation 2.2**

### **Support community-based efforts to increase access to outdoor recreation.**

Across the nation, people stressed the importance of creating recreation opportunities. This included providing spaces for recreation, establishing and maintaining recreational facilities such as trails and sidewalks, and eliminating physical barriers such as fences or roads between communities and places to recreate. People also recommended technical assistance and additional federal support for regional-scale recreation planning and for creating physical recreation connectors like trails. Many (particularly young people) observed that a primary limitation for using the great outdoors is safety.

**Action Item 2.2a:** Expand technical assistance and align programs that support local, state, and tribal efforts to enhance public recreation and conservation, including, but not limited to, the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) and the National Trails System; DOT enhancement and trails and scenic byways programs; state programs such as California's Green Sticker Program; CNCS community-based efforts to increase access to outdoor recreation; and USDA Voluntary Public Access Program (Open Fields). (DOI, USDA, DOT, and CNCS)

## **Recommendation 5.2**

### **Focus a portion of federal LWCF funds on projects that achieve AGO goals related to large-scale land conservation, urban parks and community green spaces, and river restoration and access.**

During the listening sessions, many comments suggested that LWCF funding should be more strategically focused to address the nation's most urgent conservation challenges. There needs to be strong, ongoing investment in the traditional land conservation actions of federal land management agencies, but some portion of the federal LWCF funds could be invested to complement the goals in AGO. This is especially true of those related to large-scale land conservation, urban parks, and community green spaces, and to restoration of and increased access to rivers and other waters. People throughout the nation also supported using a small portion of LWCF funds for recreation access to federal lands.

**Action Item 5.2a:** Implement an interagency process to invest part of the federal LWCF funds in high-yield conservation projects that address shared ecological goals. Use commonly accepted criteria to select opportunities where federal investment would yield the most significant ecological outcomes and community benefits. Ensure that the process is transparent, incorporates input from appropriate government and external stakeholders, and is based on sound science and good information. (CEQ, OMB, USDA and DOI)

**Action Item 5.2b:** Invest a portion of LWCF funds to increase recreation access to federal lands. (DOI and USDA)



**Action Item 5.2c:** Coordinate and align investment of federal LWCF funds with federal grant programs to states for land acquisition, as appropriate and consistent with state partner priorities—including NPS *LWCF stateside program*, FWS *North American Wetlands Conservation Act*, and the USFS *Forest Legacy Program*—to achieve AGO priorities related to urban parks and community green spaces, landscape-scale conservation, and recreational blueways. (DOI, USDA, and DOC)

#### **Recommendation 7.1**

##### **Support collaborative landscape conservation through competitive processes, including increases in LWCF funding and other programs.**

Listening session participants suggested creating a competitive fund to create incentives for landscape-scale conservation as well as focusing on more coordinate expenditures under existing conservation programs. A competitive fund would bolster existing efforts and encourage forming other local partnerships. They also argued that technical assistance for landowners and conservation partners is one of the most cost-effective ways to meet conservation goals.

**Action Item 7.1a:** Create the AGO Collaborative Landscape Conservation Initiative through coordinated competitive processes using increases in LWCF and other federal grant programs. (USDA, DOC, DOD, and DOI)

Funds would be targeted on land conservation activities, particularly voluntary purchase of conservation easements, sponsored by a state and diverse local partnerships. Selection of partnerships for funding would be based on criteria that:

- leverage other federal, local, and private resources;
- emphasize the protection of working lands;
- conserve water resources and wildlife;
- use science and mapping to target important lands;
- provide recreational opportunities;
- plan for potential climate impacts and the need for connectivity; and
- other criteria enumerated in law.

#### **Recommendation 7.2**

##### **Support landscape partnerships by targeting existing federal dollars, policies, and other resources toward conservation of private and tribal working lands and coordinating expenditures, where appropriate, across federal agencies.**

Many listening session participants noted that existing programs could be better targeted to assist and promote landscape-scale conservation and that better coordination is needed across federal agencies and with states and local partners. Many existing federal programs within USDA, DOC, DOD, and DOI contribute significantly to the conservation of working lands within important landscapes. These programs should use the best available science to implement the most effective stewardship practices and conservation actions on the most significant lands. State wildlife action plans, state forest assessments, and other local and regional priority-setting processes should inform these efforts. Federal agencies should work together to coordinate capacity building and resource expenditures wherever appropriate.

**Action Item 7.2a:** Coordinate and align, as appropriate, federal programs that provide technical or financial assistance to public and private organizations that support and implement collaborative landscape-scale conservation initiatives. Program examples include the NPS *LWCF stateside program*, USDA conservation and forestry Farm Bill programs, and the USFS *Forest Stewardship Program*. (USDA, DOC, DOD, and DOI)

#### **Recommendation 7.4**

**Develop and expand new markets, including those for the environmental services provided by working lands, for local agricultural or sustainable forest products, sustainable energy, and others.**

New markets for environmental services are developing, including climate mitigation, water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife habitat conservation, wetlands protection, sustainable energy production, and other services. These markets are in various stages of maturity. Many agencies have long supported such efforts and are exploring opportunities and innovations to expand their use. Expanding them will benefit land conservation, environmental stewardship, and landowners and allow for farms, ranches, and forests of the future to derive income from markets for environmental services. USDA and other agencies can provide landowners with technical assistance that increases agricultural and forest productivity while also enhancing land stewardship.

**Action Item 7.4a:** Support the development and expansion of environmental markets through the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, programs and authorities of USDA, and other laws and foster better coordination across federal agencies to support the development of environmental markets. (USDA, DOC, DOD, USACE, DOI, and EPA)

**Action Item 7.4b:** Support efforts in the next Farm Bill to develop and expand environmental markets. (USDA)

**Recommendation 8.1 Manage federal lands and waters within a larger landscape context to conserve and restore ecosystems and watershed health.**

To accomplish this recommendation, it will be necessary to provide support and direction to land managers to focus the diversity of funding sources on these challenges and opportunities and to expand authorities so that land managers have the flexibility to support landscape-scale conservation, and enhance the partnerships between federal, state, local and tribal governments; nonprofit organizations; and private landowners.

**Action Item 8.1a:** Integrate large, landscape-scale conservation into federal land management plans and actions. (USDA, DOD, USACE, and DOI)

Examples include:

- Continue to support the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Fund (\$40 million) to provide matched funding for proposals in high priority landscapes that support collaborative landscape conservation. (USDA)
- Develop a Forest Service planning rule that emphasizes collaboration with other land management agencies and stakeholders, landscape scale planning and conservation, adaptive management and sustainability. (USFS)
- Create budget structures to promote landscape-scale conservation and integration among resource programs. (USFS)
- Continue to protect and enhance water resources on federal lands by managing lands to protect and restore riparian areas and aquatic ecosystems, improve water quality, assess watershed condition, and invest resources in areas whose condition can be improved costeffectively and are important to the public. (USDA, DOD, and DOI)
- Complete and institutionalize a national network of 21 Landscape Conservation Cooperatives to develop the science needed to understand landscape-scale threats and craft landscape-level strategies for managing and responding to those threats. (DOI)
- Incorporate landscape-scale conservation and restoration as a priority in BLM resource management plans and programs. (BLM)
- Expand programs to develop landscape-scale assessment, modeling, and mapping to support conservation planning on federal and private lands. (DOI-USGS)

- Integrate units of the National Park System, Fish and Wildlife Refuge System, and BLM *National Landscape Conservation System* into landscape conservation and restoration activities on public lands as anchors of preservation. (BLM, FWS, NPS)
- Develop or expand existing co-management agreements between tribal and federal land managers where shared management objectives on federal lands provide for landscape-scale conservation. (DOI-BIA)

**Action Item 8.1b:** Strategically invest and align federal funds from the LWCF, Farm Bill, and other grant programs, as appropriate, to achieve landscape-scale conservation and restoration goals on public and private lands and to leverage other public and private funds. (USDA, DOD, and DOI) (*Complements Action Item 7.2a*)

**Action Item 8.1c:** Expand federal land management agency authorities, such as stewardship contracting, USFS integrated resource restoration, and the partnership authority between FWS, NPS, BLM and USFS *Service First*, to complement their ability to achieve large landscape conservation and restoration goals. (USDA and DOI)

**Action Item 8.1d:** Cultivate and support engaging local, state, and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and landowners in regions where federal agencies are conserving and restoring large landscapes through grants, planning, and capacity building. (USDA, DOD, USACE, and DOI)

## **Recommendation 8.2**

### **Manage federal lands and waters to increase their resilience to climate change.**

Public comments noted the importance of managing federal lands and waters to anticipate and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Federal land managers should implement adaptation actions that foster resilience to climate change in land, water, and wildlife. Federal lands can also be managed to mitigate climate change by increasing carbon storage in ecosystems where doing so is consistent with sound conservation and watershed protection goals. On degraded lands where risks from destructive fires, pests, or other threats are heightened, land managers should act to improve resilience while promoting long-term carbon storage consistent with conserving ecosystems and watersheds.

In advancing this recommendation, the federal land management agencies will actively engage tribal, state, and local governments, private landowners and nonprofit organizations. This recommendation and associated action items will be informed and prioritized through the recommendations of the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force.

**Action Item 8.2a:** Develop science to support decisions related to climate change adaptation and resilience. Improve science available to public land managers through consortia that use information from NOAA *Climate Service*, DOI *Climate Science Centers*, and USFS, NRCS, and other agency work. (USDA, DOC, and DOI)

**Action Item 8.2b:** Build climate change adaptation and mitigation into federal land management plans and practices. (CEQ, USDA, DOC, DOD-USACE, and DOI)

Examples include:

- Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation into national forests management through a revised Forest Planning Rule and through implementation of the USFS *Climate Change Scorecard*. (USDA-USFS)



- Use DOI's *Landscape Conservation Cooperatives* to inform management of public lands and resources. (DOI)
- Implement the NPS *Climate Response Strategy* to address the impacts of climate change in parks through science, adaptation, mitigation, and communication. (DOI-NPS)
- Develop science-based inventories and monitoring programs to assess the impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife habitat regardless of land ownership. (DOI, USDA, DOD-USACE)
- Incorporate into BLM *Resource Management Plans* provisions to support carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation. (DOI/BLM)

### **Recommendation 8.3**

#### **Manage federal lands and waters to create and protect critical wildlife corridors and maintain landscape connectivity in collaboration with other public and private stakeholders.**

Among the primary threats to the nation's fish and wildlife are habitat loss and fragmentation. Climate change will exacerbate these threats. Developing a comprehensive approach to maintaining and restoring wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity and to protecting fish and wildlife populations have become a conservation priority. Public comments noted the importance of protecting wildlife corridors that cross federal, state, tribal, and private lands. Today, many grassroots efforts to protect wildlife have evolved with collaboration among public and private agencies to expand the commitment to and investment in restoring and maintaining wildlife corridors, habitat, and connectivity for species across the American landscape.

Safeguarding wildlife resources requires sound science and mapping to prioritize management, conservation, and restoration efforts, whose effectiveness must be monitored. Public land management agencies must also partner with private land owners to support management of all lands to address the challenges of climate change.

**Action Item 8.3a:** Work with states and other partners to use and disseminate scientific data and other information concerning the locations of and threats to critical wildlife corridors to ensure effective investment in restoring and conserving of those corridors. (DOI and USDA)

**Action Item 8.3b:** Incorporate wildlife corridor conservation and restoration into federal agency plans, programs, and actions. (USDA, DOD, USACE, and DOI)

Examples include:

- Address wildlife and ecosystem connectivity through the USFS *Forest Planning Rule*, BLM *Resource Management Plans*, NPS *Park Management Plans*, and FWS *Refuge Plans*, including the placement of energy projects and transmission lines. (DOI and USDA)
- Update water project master plans and shoreline management plans to identify and sustain important wildlife and fisheries habitat and corridors at USACE and Bureau of Reclamation facilities, such as reservoirs, dams, locks, and river shorelines. (DOD-USACE, DOI)

**Action Item 8.3c:** Coordinate and leverage investment of federal funds to conserve and restore wildlife corridors with other public and private wildlife conservation entities. (DOI, USDA, DOD, and USACE)

### **Recommendation 9.4**

#### **Coordinate and align federal water resource management programs and resources.**

Many federal agencies have water management programs or provide financial and technical assistance for state and local water resources management. Improving coordination among agencies is essential to support existing resource uses and to achieve restoration, habitat, and recreation goals for the nation's rivers, lakes, estuaries, and wetlands. Key opportunities identified in listening sessions include sharing of water data and models; recognizing and planning for emerging challenges, such as the impact of climate change on water resources; and coordinating diverse water projects within a watershed to improve the sustainability and resilience of water resources.

**Action Item 9.4a:** Reduce fish passage barriers in America's streams and rivers on federal lands by targeting work to restore water quality and critically endangered aquatic species and to expand recreational fishing. (DOI, USDA, DOD, and USACE)

**Action Item 9.4b:** Identify existing mechanisms for—and ways to strengthen—coordination among water resources management agencies at federal, state, local, and tribal levels. (AGO Council)

**Action Item 9.4c:** Develop a pilot project with state and local partners to integrate land conservation with watershed-scale water management. (DOD-USACE, EPA, USDA, and DOI)